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DEPT FOR AF A/S FRAZER, SE WILLIAMSON, AF/SPG, AF/C
NSC FOR PITTMAN AND HUDSON
DEPT PLS PASS USAID FOR AFR/SUDAN
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SUBJECT: UPDATE ON TAHA-MINNAWI AGREEMENT

REF: A) KHARTOUM 1422
B) KHARTOUM 1433

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: On September 23, Muhammad Tijani, a senior SLM/MM leader and Minnawi confidant, told poloff that "so far" he is satisfied with the GoS's response to the September 19 agreement between Vice President Taha and SLM Chairman Minni Minnawi in El-Fasher (ref A). Muhammad Tijani stated that meetings with Intelligence Chief Gosh on September 21 and an expected meeting with Minister of Finance Awad Al-Jaz the afternoon of September 23 have reassured him of the GoS's desire to implement the agreement. Also on September 23, Minnawi and DPA declaration of commitment (DOCs) groups both separately commented on the El-Fasher agreement to the Sudanese press. END SUMMARY.

"SO FAR, SO GOOD"

¶2. (SBU) Two days after the Taha-Minnawi agreement in El-Fasher, a joint SLM-GOS security arrangement committee met in Khartoum on Sunday, September 21 according to Head of SLM's DPA Implementation Committee, Muhammad Tijani. Tijani reported that the following individuals attended the meeting for SLM: Ali Hussein Dausa, SLM Member of the Parliament; Muhammad Suliman, former General Secretary of the TDRA; Muhammad Tijani; and Fadil Sa'id, SLM/MM General Secretary of the Security Arrangements Committee. The GoS was represented by: Salah Gosh, head of National Intelligence; Muhammad Ahmed Al-Dabbi, chairman of the TDRA's Security Arrangements Committee; and Atta Al-Mannan, former Governor of South Darfur. (See ref B for CDA's and Polchief's meeting with Al-Mannan.)

¶3. (SBU) Tijani stated that in the two and one-half hour meeting, SLM/MM and GoS representatives agreed to form a joint military commission based in El-Fasher. This commission will investigate the latest round of fighting near Birmaza, Deisa, and East Jebel Marra. The commission in El-Fasher will also observe the ceasefire between SLM/MM and the GoS "which has held since Friday, as there has been no fighting or bombing." Tijani stated that the parties also agreed to finally establish the six security mechanisms laid out in the DPA (e.g. ceasefire commission, joint commission, etc.) The group discussed non-military logistic support for SLM/MM as "our people are in a bad shape and need food and shelter." Tijani noted that although an exact figure has not been finalized, SLM/MM previously requested a monthly payment of \$250,000 from the GoS for non-military logistical support for its fighters. Tijani stated that this same group plans on meeting again in Khartoum on Sunday, September 28. Tijani noted that the group hopes to agree upon a more precise timeline for the formation of these committees in this next meeting.

MEETING WITH AL-JAZ

¶4. (SBU) Tijani noted that SLM/MM officials in Khartoum would also meet the GoS Minister of Finance Awad Al-Jaz on the afternoon of September 23 to discuss this and other financial issues. This

meeting will also include Atta Al-Mannan, the three Ministers of Finance from North, South, and West Darfur, and the head of the Darfur Reconstruction and Development Fund.

NO RELATION WITH SUDAN PEOPLE'S INITIATIVE

15. (SBU) When asked about the relationship between the Sudan People's Initiative (reftel B) and this latest push to implement the DPA, Tijani appeared dismissive of the former, saying "We have discussed this before and there is nothing there to the Sudan People's Initiative yet." Tijani laughed, saying that this is the Government's thirty-eighth initiative that "has led to nowhere."

DOUBTS ABOUT TIMELINE AND WHAT WAS NOT COVERED

16. (SBU) Tijani appeared skeptical of the original timeline of one month agreed upon by Taha and Minnawi saying "it could take a lot longer than we thought to accomplish what we want." Tijani stated that the September 21 meeting did not cover the following issues: protection of IDPs; the creation of joint security patrols along major highways; the incorporation of the DPA into the interim constitution; the division within SLM/MM and the NCP's role in this. Tijani expressed hope that these issues will be covered in future meetings.

WHERE IS NAFIE IN ALL OF THIS?

17. (SBU) Tijani stated that he is not worried that Vice President Taha pushed forward this agreement in Nafie Ali Nafie's absence. According to Tijani, Vice President Taha received approval from President Bashir for this agreement with Minnawi. Tijani noted that this agreement is also the culmination of SLM/MM's discrete ongoing

KHARTOUM 00001445 002 OF 002

dialogue with Atta Al-Mannan which has been proceeding for "some time now." Tijani stated that although Nafie still formally holds the Darfur portfolio, elements of the Darfur file have slowly been handed off to other senior NCP leaders. For example, Gosh has taken over Darfur security and Atta Al-Mannan now covers all wealth sharing issues on Darfur. "Nafie has had the file for so long and nothing has happened, and I think the NCP leadership finally has realized that others need to be involved," noted Tijani.

PRESS REPORTS

18. (SBU) Also on September 23, Minni Minnawi reportedly told the pro-government "Al-Rai Al-Aam" that his return to Khartoum depends on implementation of the September 19 El-Fasher Agreement, but that he hopes to return to Khartoum within one month. Minnawi also noted that the El-Fasher agreement is simply a "reinforcement" of the DPA and threatened that this is the "last opportunity to implement the Abuja agreement." Minnawi also reportedly commended the first joint security committee meeting. Additionally, on September 23, a coalition of declaration of commitment (DOCs) groups to the DPA issued a press release in support of the El-Fasher Minnawi-Taha agreement, but demanded that all DOC groups be included in this latest effort to implement the DPA. (Full text of this statement will be sent to AF/SPG and the Office of the SE.) CDA Fernandez spoke to Minnawi by satphone on September 22 and Minnawi noted that "things were quiet, which is good, but the government hasn't moved yet, which is not so good." He had not yet communicated with his people in Khartoum on the Gosh and Al-Jaz meetings but was cautiously optimistic that there would be progress, "at least in the short run."

COMMENT

19. (SBU) Although it is still too early to tell, Tijani's optimism was encouraging for several reasons. First, Tijani was not concerned that the agreement resulted simply from an internal NCP power struggle, as it was endorsed by President Bashir and resulted from an ongoing dialogue with the canny Al-Mannan and many other NCP leaders. Second, Tijani hinted that the GoS demonstrated that it values this agreement, as senior officials such as Salah Gosh and Awad Al-Jaz have all been immediately available to SLM/MM representatives. Third, Tijani, perhaps somewhat naively, did not

fear that ICC proceedings solely motivated or could potentially upset this newfound goodwill by the GoS. Although an ICC indictment could ultimately kill the agreement, for now we should appreciate this rare moment and do all we can to support this fragile spirit of cooperation between the GoS and SLM/MM.

FERNANDEZ